

Fort Des Moines Historic Complex,
Building 58
(Barracks)
Des Moines
Polk County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-121-G

HABS
IOWA,
77-DESMO,
24-G-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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Building No. 58. Barracks

This structure, located on the south side of the parade ground next to Building Nos. 55-56, began as one half of a double barracks identical to Building Nos. 55-56. Completed on January 23, 1904, at a cost of \$61,627.86, it rested on a stone foundation was built of red brick in running bond using red-pigmented mortar, and had a slate roof. Like the preceding structure, this barracks adhered to plan 75G adopted by the Quartermaster General's office in 1902 and had a capacity for 200 men. The unit originally consisted of a main building with dimensions of 71 feet 8 inches by 39 feet 4 inches, plus two wings each measuring 39 feet 4 inches by 103 feet 4 inches.

The two wings are joined by the main structure. A two-tiered porch with iron railing once graced the front of the main building, with turned wooden columns supporting the porch and its roof. Doorways on the front stood adjacent to the wings and were attained via two sets of steps leading from the ground to the lower level porch. The doors were paneled and had 6-light transoms, and all windows and doorways possess segmental arches. Windows have limestone lug sills. Either level in front contains six double sash windows of 2-over-2 lights each. The two-tiered porch was repeated at the rear of the main building, along with the windows at each level. Two more doors were located at the lower level there. Each of the wings also had a two-tiered porch at front, but at the rear a porch adjoined only the first level. Along the outside walls of the wings are seventeen windows--nine at the top level and eight at the lower. In addition, a side door leads to the basement. Along the foundation wall are five vertically barred basement windows and two coal chutes. Along the courtyard side of each wing are ten double sash windows, five at each level. Five basement windows are along the foundation level, while a double basement door and steps occurs at the inside of the el. Another cellar hatch exists on the west side of the

building near the northwest corner. The ridged roof of the main building supports six corbeled chimneys, while the gabled roofs of each wing carry one chimney and two ventilators.

Below the gables on either end are two double hung attic windows. Those in front, in Palladian design, contained six lights, those at the rear contained four. A fire escape is on the west side of the structure.

Floor space for Building No. 58 consisted of 6,720 square feet, arranged as follows:

Basement:

Cellar, 33' 1" x 36' 3" (including store room and coal bin)
Lavatory, 32' 9" x 36' 3"
Boiler room, 32' 9" x 36' 3" (including coal bin)
Hall, 11' 7" x 36'
Cellar, 23' 6" x 36'

First floor:

Mess room, 33' 1" x 36' 10"
Dormitory, 33' 2" x 38' 6"
Hall and Vestibule, 11' 7" x 36' 8"
Sergeant's room, 11' 7" x 16' 4"
Store room, 8' 4" x 11' 6"
Tailor shop, 11' 6" x 11' 10"
Company office, 11' 7" x 19' 10"
NCO room, 11' 6" x 15' 4"
Cook's room, 10' 7" x 11' 10"
Pantry, 10' 7" x 11' 10"
Kitchen, 22' 3" x 36' 10"

Second floor:

Dormitory, 36' 10" x 100' 10"
Hall, 11' 7" x 16' 4"
Barber shop, 11' 6" x 16' 4"
NCO room, 11' 7" x 16' 4"
Day room, 19' 10" x 36'

Attic:

Room, 36' 10" x 100' 10"
Room, 36' 8" x 37'

Both units of the double barracks were equipped with electricity and steam heat. When Fort Des Moines served as a general hospital, 1918-19, the structure composed Wards No. 9 and 10. The inside of the building has wooden floors and plaster walls and is similar to that for Building Nos. 55-56. The basement has plaster walls with metal laths. The lavatory there has a ceiling composed of pressed metal panels. Chimneys have ash dumps in their bottoms, while basement windows are of the awning style with three lights each. A double handrail and stairs leads to the first level. There the doorways exhibit half-rounded casings and 3-light transoms. The doors have five panels each. The original ceilings had bed mold, although the ceilings have since been lowered and plastered. The floor is of painted masonite sheeting.

A balustraded bannister and accompanying stairway leads to the second level, where the dormitory room has plastered wood girders supported by metal pipe columns. The north end of the dormitory has had wood frame and drywall partitions added. Fluorescent lighting has been installed throughout the building. The attic has a concrete floor and shows evidence of major structural restoration from fire, including the presence of steel trusses and purlins, besides 2 x 6 inch tongue-in-groove decking. In addition, the attic framing has been fitted with rollers for light duty use as an overhead crane.

Average cost of repairs to the barracks from 1904 to 1922 was \$270 per year, with major unspecified work completed in 1910, 1911, 1913, 1916, 1921, and 1922. In 1928 and 1929 substantial plumbing repairs and alterations occurred.

On December 18, 1930, fire destroyed that half of the barracks constituting Building No. 57 and caused major damage to Building No. 58. Estimated losses stood at \$77,500. In August, 1932, the Secretary of War directed that \$15,000 be expended in restoring the interior of Building No. 58. At that time the structure housed detachments of the Ordnance Corps and Signal Corps, besides serving as a recruiting office and a

facility for conducting schools and courts-martial. In 1933 part of the building was in use as a physical examination station of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The roof of Building No. 58 was repaired in September, 1932, at a cost of \$9,958.00. Restoration of the other half of the structure, the gutted Building No. 57, was deferred pending availability of funds; it was roofed and closed in the meantime. The proposed work, however, never won army approval, and the walls of Building No. 57 were subsequently removed. The exterior firewall of Building No. 58 was covered with red-pigmented stucco. Three windows were added to each level of the firewall. In 1941 Building No. 58 was converted for use as a processing station when Fort Des Moines became a reception center for recruits. As of 1987 the structure was vacant. Although the exterior masonry was in good condition, the wood of the cornices was in deteriorating condition. The chimney at the east end showed damage. The porches had been removed from all sides but the rear of the wing. (21)

21. Card for Building Nos. 57-58. "Historical Record of Buildings." NA, RG 77, Box 51. Plan, "Two Co. Barrack," No. 75G, April 1902, 9 sheets. NA, RG 77. Cartographic Archives Division; Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, August 30, 1932. NA, RG 94. Central Files, 1926-39, Box No. 2998; Lieutenant Colonel David E. Cain to the Adjutant General, September 18, 1939. Ibid. Colonel C.D. Hartman to the Adjutant General, June 21, 1940. Ibid.; Headquarters, Fort Des Moines, to Commanding General, Seventh Corps Area, May 30, 1940. NA, RG 407. Project Decimal File. Military Posts and Reservations, Box No. 4425; Major Hal C. Bush to Colonel Pegram and Lieutenant Colonel Donaldson, Headquarters, Seventh Corps Area, March 6, 1941. Ibid.; Field Survey notes, February 20-22, 1987.